

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent  
*Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15<sup>th</sup> District*



For Immediate Release  
December 17, 2005

Contact: Gregg W. Bortz  
610-861-9734 or (cell) 202-222-5118

## Dent touts bill to greatly enhance border security

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, voted to boost America's ability to defend her borders through the Border Security and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2005, H.R. 4437. The bill passed by bipartisan vote of 239-182.

"Protecting our country is priority one of the federal government, and this bill will greatly enhance our ability to keep our borders secure," Congressman Dent said. "H.R. 4437 recognizes that the border is a dangerous place. It is a haven for illegal activity from property destruction to drug dealing to human trafficking, and other heinous crimes. It is also a potential conduit for terrorists who would seek to come to this country to do us harm."

Accordingly, the border security provisions of the bill take steps to prevent terrorists from entering the United States by: establishing operational control of all borders and ports through enhanced Border Patrol operations, physical barriers, and state-of-the-art technology; ending the "catch and release" practice along the southwest border; streamlining operations within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) border security agencies; and promoting both international and domestic policies that will deter further illegal entry into the United States.

The U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security marked up H.R. 4312, The Border Security and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2005, on Nov. 17, 2005. With some minor modifications, the bill was combined with

immigration enforcement provisions from the Committee on the Judiciary and introduced as H.R. 4437 on Dec. 6, 2005.

In November, Congressman Dent voted with the House Homeland Security Committee's majority to include an amendment by U.S. Rep. Dan Lungren (CA-3), which would give the law enforcement greater ability to turn back non-Mexican citizens who enter the United States illegally through the Mexican border. Some counter-terrorism experts warn that terrorists could get into the country that way.

"In this day and age, it is inexcusable that we would allow somebody to basically crash the gates of this country and then stay here, unaccounted, while the bureaucracy figures out what to do," Congressman Dent said.

Below are the issues addressed by and key provisions of H.R. 4437:

## **I. Establish Operational Control of All Borders and Ports**

Committed to gaining operational control of our borders and preventing the unlawful entry of potential terrorists and criminals, the bill:

- Requires DHS and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to develop a joint strategic plan that will provide the Border Patrol with military support and increased use of DOD surveillance
- Mandates DHS to conduct comprehensive risk assessments of all ports of entry and international land and maritime borders to prevent the entry of terrorists and weapons
- Authorizes 1,000 new, full-time port of entry inspectors over the next four years and the training of 1,500 additional K-9 units over the next five years
- Establishes physical barriers and incorporates widespread, state-of-the-art surveillance technology, including cameras, sensors, radar, satellite, and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), in order to ensure 100 percent coverage of our borders

## **II. Elimination of the "Catch and Release" Practice**

This year alone, some 120,000 illegal aliens from countries other than Mexico (OTMs) have been apprehended by the Border Patrol, only to be released due to a lack of detention space. Realizing that this so-called "catch

and release” practice presents a gap in our nation’s homeland security efforts, the bill:

- Requires mandatory detention for all aliens who are apprehended at U.S. land borders attempting to cross illegally, by Oct. 1, 2006
- Requires all illegal immigrants apprehended at U.S. borders to remain in custody until removal from the country
- Mandates that DHS make use of every available detention bed, and utilize other cost-effective options to increase detention space, including contracting with state and local jails
- Requires that, in the interim period before Oct. 1, 2006, aliens who are released pending an immigration removal hearing will have to post bond of at least \$5,000 in order to help ensure their appearance

### **III. Effectively Organize the Border Security Agencies Within DHS**

Recognizing the need to eliminate a number of identified organizational, operational, fiscal, and communications problems between U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the two main border security agencies within DHS, the bill:

- Requires the Secretary take immediate action to address the lack of coordination between ICE and CBP by mandating improved intelligence sharing and implementing measures to determine the effectiveness of the Department’s border security efforts
- Places Air and Marine Operations (AMO) directly under the authority of the Secretary, eliminating current bureaucracy and allowing for a more flexible, coordinated air program capable of providing tracking, deterrence, rapid response, and investigative support to multiple DHS agencies

### **IV. Promote International Policies to Deter Illegal Immigration**

In addition to taking action domestically, the bill promotes international policies to help deter illegal immigration and protects valid claims of asylum. This includes:

- Requiring DHS to report to Congress on the progress of cross-border security agreements signed between Mexico and Canada and the

United States, including the Smart Border Accord and the Security and Prosperity Partnership

- Authorizing the Secretary of Homeland Security to refuse admission to foreign nationals from countries that deny or delay the repatriation of their own nationals
- Protecting valid claims of asylum and fear of persecution through a review of the current Border Patrol training protocol, and taking measures to ensure integrity of the process

# # #